About LEVEL news

## Contents

Water Levels Near Low End of Seasonal Range

International Joint Commission Decides Not To Adopt New Regulation Plan

Public Hearings Held

Lake Ontario Outflows

January Precipitation

January Outflows

Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour *... a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

January Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term January average:

| | |
|---|---|
| Great Lakes Basin | 152% |
| Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair) | 154% |
| Lake Superior | 104% |
| Lakes Michigan-Huron | 161% |
| Lake Ontario | 204% |

# LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

**Volume 7, Number 2** **February 5, 1999**

**Heavy Precipitation Raises Lake Ontario's Level**

## Water Levels Near Low End of Seasonal Range

Water levels on Lakes Ontario and Erie began to rise during the last two weeks of January, while levels on Lakes Huron and Superior stabilized during the two week period. It now appears that Lakes Ontario, Erie and St. Clair have already hit their low points for the winter, while the other lakes are close to their seasonal low.

After four months of below average rainfall, the combination of heavy snowfall and rainfall led to above average precipitation during January over Lake Ontario's basin. This, combined with significant snowmelt late in the month, pushed up the lake's level. By the end of January, Lake Ontario was still 18 cm below average. Heavier precipitation and snowmelt also affected Lake Erie's basin, and by the end of January its level was 12 cm above average.

As a result of ice buildup in the Detroit River due to cold weather at the beginning of January, Lake St. Clair's water level rose by 40 cm in eight days. Warm weather entered the area around the middle of the month, which reduced the ice buildup, and the lake's level declined 40 cm in five days. At the end of January, the lake was 27 cm above average.

Lake Huron's level remained almost static during January, and by month's end it was six cm below average. Meanwhile, the end of month level on Lake Superior was 23 cm below average.

---

## International Joint Commission Decides Not To Adopt New Regulation Plan

The International Joint Commission has decided not to adopt Plan 1998 for the regulation of Lake Ontario outflows at this time. The IJC determined that it does not have sufficient information on the environmental impacts associated with the proposed plan and that the plan would not provide sufficient improvement over the existing situation. The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control will continue to manage the waters of the Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River system according to Plan 1958-D with the Board exercising its discretionary authority to deviate from the plan as situations arise, as is presently the case.

**Note**: These figures are preliminary.

January Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term January average:

| | |
|---|---|
| Lake Superior | 80% |
| Lake Erie | 100% |
| Lake Huron | 107% |
| Lake Ontario | 93% |

**Note**: These figures are preliminary.

Last Issue

Next Issue

Issue Index

Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

Plan 1998 was developed by the St. Lawrence River Board following studies, conducted by another IJC study board that ended in 1993, that examined issues related to water level fluctuations in the Great Lakes, including possible improvements to Plan 1958-D. Public meetings were held in the fall of 1997 to give interested parties an opportunity to learn about, and express their views on Plan 1998.

The IJC will continue to pursue funding for the more comprehensive studies outlined in a "Scope of Work" prepared by the St. Lawrence River Board. The purpose of these studies is to provide sufficient information for the Commission to determine whether or not changes are warranted to the IJC's criteria that govern Lake Ontario regulation.

## Public Hearings Held

On January 27 and 28 the IJC held public hearings in Niagara Falls, Ontario and Amherst, New York to receive comments from the public and organizations on two proposed projects. One project is the twinning of the Peace Bridge between Fort Erie and Buffalo, and the second project is the construction by Ontario Hydro of a third tunnel to transport water from the Niagara River upstream of the falls to the Sir Adam Beck generating stations at Queenston.

Some of the main points raised by the public were concerns that the piers of the Peace Bridge would have an impact on Lake Erie's water level (studies have shown that there will be zero impact) and concerns that an increase in the frequency of high discharge from the hydroelectric generating stations could have an impact on the fishery in that vicinity.

Both meetings were well attended, with about 45 at the Niagara Falls meeting and 40 at the Amherst meeting.

## Lake Ontario Outflows

To provide relief to the Port of Montreal, which was affected by record low water levels during the fall, the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control directed that the Lake Ontario outflow be more than the amount specified by the regulation plan. The over-discharges, which took place from late October through December, were aimed at maintaining chart datum water level at the port. River ice below Montreal, brought on by cold air just prior to the New Year, raised the harbour's level and removed the need for further over-discharges. Beginning January 1, the Board resumed use of the regulation plan to determine outflows from Lake Ontario, except for variations necessary for ice management in the St. Lawrence River.

The extra release of water from Lake Ontario during the October - December period has resulted in an actual Lake Ontario level of about 7 cm lower than that which would have occurred if the regulation plan had been strictly followed. Although it was as much as 28 cm below seasonal average during this period, Lake Ontario remained at least one-half metre higher than in 1934.

Top of Page
Français | Contact Us | Help | Search | Canada Site
What's New | Topics | Publications | Weather | Home | About Us

**part of Environment Canada's Green Lane™**

Webmaster
Last Updated: 2001-01-03
Last Reviewed: 2001-01-03

Important Notices and Disclaimers
URL: http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/water/level-news/lvn99feb.html